

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9537

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, TD, US

SUBJECT: CLAIMS CONCERNING FORMER U.S. NAVAL BASE
AT CHAGUARAMAS

REF: (A) STATE 148243, (B) PORT OF SPAIN 1097

1. DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE (REF A) TO EARLIER QUERY REGARDING CLAIMS ASSOCIATED WITH U.S. LEASED AREAS AT CHAGUARAMAS, TRINIDAD, WAS HELPFUL AND OUR REPLY TO THE "BACK TO CHAGUARAMAS ACTION COMMITTEE" WAS CO-ORDINATED LOCALLY WITH BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER AND TRINIDAD MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

2. INDICATION IN REF A THAT RECORDS CANNOT BE LOCATED REGARDING PAYMENTS TO PROPERTY OWNERS BY USG MAY BE TROUBLESOME, HOWEVER. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT RECORDS SHOULD EXIST REGARDING TRANSACTIONS OF THIS NATURE DIRECTLY CALLED FOR IN AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

3. FOLLOW-UP ACTION BY THE CITIZENS COMMITTEE OF FORMER CHAGUARAMAS LANDOWNERS HAS BEEN IN QUICK IN MATERIALIZING AND WE ARE NOW IN RECEIPT OF LETTER SPECIFICALLY REQUESTING A RECORD OF THE PAYMENTS TO LANDOWNERS BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. WE CAN DEAL WITH CITIZENS COMMITTEE BY AGAIN REFERRING THEM TO THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (GOTT), BUT AS THIS ISSUE WAXES
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HOT IN THE COMING MONTHS SIMILAR REQUESTS TO US FROM

THE GOVERNMENT ARE HIGHLY LIKELY. THE ISSUE WILL CONTINUE TO GENERATE STEAM LOCALLY AS THE PROPERTY OWNERS ESCALATE THEIR CASE IN THE FULL KNOWLEDGE THAT THE REMAINING UNITED STATES LEASE ARRANGEMENTS AND RIGHTS UNDER THE TREATY WILL EXPIRE DECEMBER 1977. GOTT INACTION REGARDING DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE AREAS ALREADY RELEASED BY THE USG TO THE GOTT HAS ALSO BECOME A PUBLIC ISSUE AND IS FUELING EFFORT OF FORMER OWNERS TO RECOVER PROPERTY.

4. IF NECESSARY, WE CAN STATE THAT PERTINENT RECORDS DO NOT EXIST, BUT IN INTEREST OF POTENTIAL NEGOTIATIONS FOR EXTENSION OF OMEGA NAVIGATION FACILITY OR OTHER RIGHTS NOW ENJOYED UNDER THE EXPIRING AGREEMENT, BELIEVE IT IS WORTHWHILE MAKING FURTHER EFFORT TO LOCATE RELATED RECORDS. ESSENTIAL QUESTION AT ISSUE NOW IS COMPENSATION TO ORIGINAL LANDOWNERS, COMPENSATION WHICH THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT NEGOTIATED AND PAID DIRECTLY TO THE LANDOWNERS AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE ORIGINAL AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 1941 (PARAGRAPH 2, REF A).

5. WHILE USG PRESUMABLY DID MAKE THE PAYMENTS REQUIRED, IT WOULD BE VERY DESIRABLE FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW TO BE ABLE TO SAY DEFINITELY THAT BY A SPECIFIED DATE THE USG HAD PAID A SPECIFIED SUM REPRESENTING COMPENSATION FOR ALL OWNERS OF PROPERTY IN THE AREAS COVERED BY THE ORIGINAL BASES AGREEMENT. DEPARTMENT IS THEREFORE REQUESTED TO MAKE ANOTHER EFFORT TO DETERMINE EXACTLY HOW THE USG COMPLIED WITH ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS TO COMPENSATE PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS.

6. SUBSEQUENT TO WRITING THE ABOVE, WE HAVE RECEIVED COPY OF RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENT BY THE SHADOW FOREIGN MINISTER OF ONE OF THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTIES (DEMOCRATIC ACTION CONGRESS) ALLEGING THAT DESPITE USG COMMITMENT TO DO SO, U.S. NEVER PAID ANY COMPENSATION TO FORMER CHAGUARAMAS LANDOWNERS.
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